

**Testimony for the record by Eddie A. Perez
Mayor, City of Hartford
Submitted to:
The Connecticut General Assembly
Education Committee
February 23, 2009**

Good afternoon Chairs Gaffey and Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony concerning the impact of the legislation before you today on the City of Hartford. I am Mayor Eddie A. Perez.

As many of you may know, education initiatives in Hartford have been one of the key focuses of my administration since taking office in 2001. The City of Hartford has redesigned its curriculum, instituted challenging new standards for teacher and student success, and along with the State, created a number of highly regarded charter and magnet schools. We've begun to make significant progress in closing the achievement gap suffered by Hartford's schools, and a great deal of that success should be attributed to the support of this Committee and the greater General Assembly.

The Board of Education and the city's leadership are grateful for your endorsement of our efforts and we have aimed to demonstrate that through increased accountability and improved results. Certainly, Hartford's achievements have rebuilt confidence in the Capitol City's School district.

Recognizing the constraining reality presented by the financial crisis we continue to share that burden with the State; cutting school budgets, reducing staff, limiting operations and restricting development to only the most critical projects. We have had to make some difficult decisions, and thankfully the spirit of hope and reform have persevered none-the-less.

Governor Rell's budget has set a solid foundation for the funding of education in the State of Connecticut; it provides for stasis. However, despite our tremendous improvements, stasis is not a valid option for Hartford's education system. There is simply too much work to be done in our city, and a loss of momentum at this important stage of progress would have a significant and long lasting negative impact that will be felt both in Hartford and surrounding communities.

There are a number of positive, thoughtful elements to many of the proposed bills; SB-946 addresses the need for a comprehensive and guiding State plan inter-district magnet schools, as well as importance of keeping tuition at a reasonable rate. There are also represented a number of propositions that I believe would be detrimental to the success of Hartford's reform mission; particularly, HB-6495 which would strain the resources and alter the focus of those communities that chose to enter into participation agreements at the creation of inter-district schools.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your past support and ask that for your continued support of our The Hartford Public School System.

Thank you.

